



Friends of Ropner Park

Patron
Sir Henry Ropner



Newsletter
Autumn
2019
50p to
Non Members

Chairman`s Ramble

Concerts and Events

Forp has had a successful outdoor season. Apart from the occurrence of a midsummer monsoon which led to the rescheduling of the Eid Fusion Festival. The Palm Sunday Stalls, the Spring Fair and band concerts went according to plan. Details are inside.

Café

Thank you to the café staff for their hard work and quality service. The café becomes busier each year which is very encouraging. However various improvements need to be made.

The floor needs to be resurfaced and the café furniture replaced.

Stockton Council has no money to help with these necessities which is why our fund raising becomes more vital and could lead to these improvements over the winter months.

Ceilidh

The first of our fund raising events this winter will be the Ceilidh which will be held in Stockton Cricket Club on Friday 15th. November.

Tickets are only £10 which includes a lucky ticket draw. mince, vegetable or GF pie and peas will be served.

Tickets are available from the Ropner Park café
Tel 01642 633767.

Chairman`s Ramble (contd.)

Summer behind the scenes has not been easy.

2019 has been a difficult year for the trustees of Friends of Ropner Park. We were beginning to get well settled into our jobs and responsibilities when Bob Thomson our “New Boy” to use his own words became ill and sadly died in April. I took over some of Bob`s duties but within a few weeks I became ill. Thankfully I am now well on the way to full health again but during most of the summer the remaining trustees had to cope. And they did very well.

Park users would not notice any problems.

Dave Clark

I have enjoyed ambling through the park on Sunday afternoons to enjoy the concerts. Near to Tony`s van I could always find Dave Clark and have a natter, usually about the latest Boro performance, before I settled down to listen to the band. Dave meanwhile would do the rounds litter picking with Tony. He would do the same at the events and also help to bring in the chairs and tidy up afterwards. Nothing was too much for Dave, but he didn`t make a fuss about it. You couldn`t find a nicer man than Dave Clark.

It came as a great shock to learn that Dave had taken ill and died suddenly in the middle of September. I shall still come to the concerts next year when they restart. But it won`t be the same without Dave. We shall all miss him enormously.



Fund Raising

Raising money apart from our usual activities has now become the norm. We are a progressive group who aim to improve Ropner Park and its facilities. We are holding two events in Stockton Cricket Club over the winter and may consider more. This newsletter details some of the improvements that we consider are necessary.

New Board Member

We were pleased to welcome **Jack Stokes** to the board at our AGM in June. Jack has been present at our planning meetings for the Eid Fusion Festival for the last three years. He has brought the police cadets to our events where they helped with the set up and with the many tasks that occur during the day.

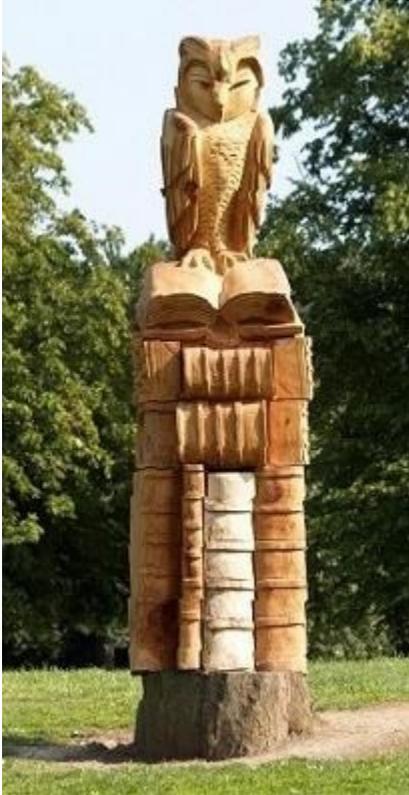
We have just learned that Jack has been accepted for his full police training.

We wish him all the best in his new career.

Brian Scafton

The Ropner Park Owl

The Co-op stores in Stockton have raised over £6,000 towards the FoRP sculpture trail around Ropner Park (now called "Stories from the Park"). The first sculpture "The Owl" was installed in the morning of Tuesday April 30th. overlooking the park lake.



The Owl overlooking the lake

Official Opening

The statue was officially unveiled by the Mayor of Stockton Cllr. Eileen Johnson at the Spring Fair on May 5th. 2019

Sculptor Steve Iredale, was commissioned by Friends of Ropner Park to design and carve the sculpture. "I was inspired by the idea of the wise owl and the learned books, I hope it encourages children to read books" said Steve.

The first statue, facing the lake is very impressive. FoRP is still one of the Co-op's preferred charities so funds are being gathered to build further artworks..



Detail showing the learned books

Schools` Involvement

Steve`s partner Kate Rider visited Oxbridge Lane and Fairfield schools to talk to classes in year 4. She showed them a slideshow of Steve`s work and they discussed it and drew many ideas, hopefully for another sculpture. Steve would like to thank Stockton Borough Council for their assistance with logistics, installation and safety aspects.

Volunteers Group

The volunteers still meet regularly in the café once a month to discuss events and projects that they are raising money for. Various craft items are still made at home, mainly to sell on the craft stall at the Christmas Fair. There is an average attendance of fourteen volunteers, who all have a say on how money raised by them should be spent.

The two main fund-raising projects at the moment are: to have a shelter for dog walkers installed adjacent to the café and to have the inside of the café redecorated and the floor re-sanded. If enough funds are raised the furniture will be replaced. The current tables and chairs have served us well for over sixteen years.

Volunteer Trips

June, our Treasurer who died last year, had started to run the tea and coffee stall in order that any profits would be used for volunteers' trips.

Anne and Diana, helped by others, have continued this system and it is working very well. On May 1st this year we had a very enjoyable day out, combining shopping in Harrogate before lunch followed by a visit to Harlow Carr Gardens with a guided tour.

The next trip will be on Friday 13th

December. This time we will visit the **Harlow Carr Gardens.**

Christmas Markets at Bowes Museum in **Photo by Ruth Ross**

Barnard Castle, have a look round the

museum and wait for the silver swan to perform at 2.00pm.

If you would like to come along to our volunteer meetings, look on the café noticeboard for dates and times or visit our website or Facebook page. You will be made very welcome.



Bark in the Park Dog Show 2019

There was plenty of barking in Ropner Park on September 1st. The show's main organisers, Stan and Sheila Taylorson, were pleased at the number of entrants.

Thank you to Barclays Bank for match funding our tombola.



Judges Favourite



We had added interest this year. Elaine King was spinning alpaca wool and there was a display of dog obedience from Paw Performers (right).



Cutest puppy.





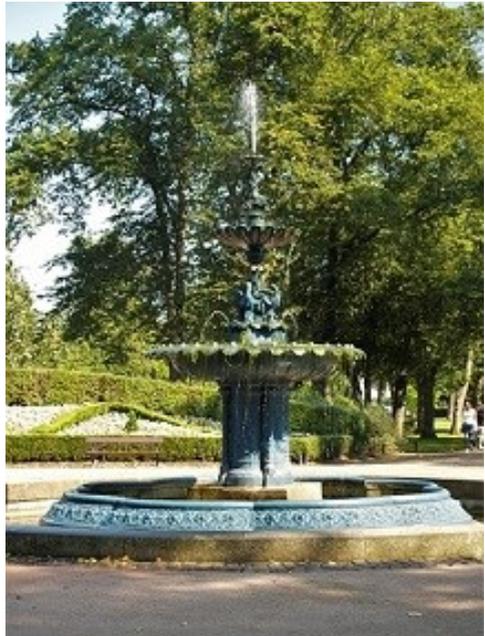
The Ranger Reports

Don't be fooled by the September weather - the leaves are turning and there's already been a mild frost in the small hours, so it is clear that autumn is upon us. Autumn is a surprisingly busy time of year for gardeners and the same is true for the Council's Grounds Maintenance staff. Depending on the weather the grass can continue to be cut until late in October and this overlaps with the removal of the summer bedding displays, so you may well see a lot of activity around Ropner as the days get shorter.

Spring Flower Beds

Once the summer plants are removed, the beds are soon restocked with the spring flowering ones, which themselves can take several weeks to plant. Shrub bed maintenance follows the planting, although that runs through into the winter when the park lies dormant for several months.

Other work that prepares the park for the winter is the emptying and servicing of the fountain and the lake aeration system going on to its winter setting of just an hour per day. This keeps the system in good order and prevents it seizing in cold weather as well as helping to break up the ice if the winter proves to be particularly cold.



The Ropner Park Fountain

The Ranger Reports (contd.)

Visitors with children may see that the large swing has been replaced - while those who use the tennis courts will see that the nets have been changed for new ones. Visitors who prefer to take life easy will see that the picnic tables have been repainted. Other scheduled work includes the repainting of toilets and the replacement of the Perspex in the noticeboards.

Lastly, visitors who are familiar with the Council gardening staff will see less of Fred from now on as he will be relocating to the new Crematorium to take up full time gardening duties up there.

Christmas Fair



This year's Christmas Fair will take place on Sunday 8th. December from 11.00—1.00. Organised by the Friends of Ropner Park it is a relaxing morning event in keeping with its setting in a Victorian park. Santa is always a popular visitor and often attracts a long queue.

Santa entertains

There will be live music and the choir of St. Peter's Church will lead the carol singing.

Christmas goodies will be on offer as well as a seasonal tombola. The café will be open for snacks and refreshments.

A stroll around Ropner Park is also very pleasant, even in December.



Punch and mince pies

The Ropner Park café

Winter Opening Hours

Weekdays 10.30 – 2 Weekends 10 - 3

Sunday Lunches

Adults £5.95 Pensioners £4.95 Children £3.95

The Sunday lunches are very popular.

Hot Winter Specials £4.99

Served Monday—Friday

November, December and January

Served between 12.00 and 2.00

Afternoon Teas

Price £7.50 per person

Reservations required

Book at the café or ring 01642 633767

Afternoon Teas in the Ropner Park café are a great way to relax with your friends. **Book Now.**

Ropner Park Band Concerts

The first concert in 2019 was a tribute to Margaret Eglington who organised the bandstand music for many years. Stan Taylorson has taken over and has produced a quality programme which has been well appreciated by the many people who come and relax every Summer Sunday.



Jeremy McMurray performs



The Cockerton Prize Silver Band provided the entertainment on 23rd. June.

The weather only spoiled our enjoyment on one day when the park was flooded and the EID Fusion Festival and the concert had to be cancelled. The festival was rearranged and took place on 21st. July (see page 10).

Autumn Colour

Ropner Park was still looking fabulous when this photo was taken in the middle of September.



The Eid Fusion Festival



This year's Eid Fusion Festival was initially postponed due to extreme weather conditions. This was the first time in the six-year history of the event that such a thing had happened. However due to the hard work of the Friends of Ropner Park and the Community Welfare Trust a new date was set for the Eid Fusion Festival.



The Festival took place on the 21st July with a beautiful backdrop of some amazing weather and smiling faces. The local people of Teesside turned out in numbers and the park was a bustling hive of activity.

The Mayor of Stockton Cllr. Lynn Hall with the chairmen of CWT and FoRP open the event.

Stalls were filled with various wonderful and unique items from local independent vendors and small businesses. The food marquee was once again a success with the Pakistani-

inspired food items selling out by mid-afternoon. Families welcomed the chance to enjoy a picnic in the wonderful sunshine whilst taking a break from all the children's activities available such as funfair rides, vintage bus tour and games. Henna and face painting added to the festival vibe.



Stalls were very busy

The event started with an amazing opening performance from the TS18 Street Dancers who captured the attention of the crowd and received a warm welcome. The scene was set for the first of two performances from the renowned Chand Ali Khan Qawwal and Party who wowed the audience with their unique take on Sufi-inspired music and they left the crowd wanting more.

EID Fusion Festival (Contd.)

As the afternoon progressed the festival atmosphere seem to grow and the crowd were further treated to a unique performance from the popular Furness Music Centre. We were lucky enough to welcome them to this year`s festival as it coincided with their regional tour. The talented musicians and singers entertained the crowd throughout their two performances.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers from Friends of Ropner Park and Community Welfare Trust, without all the dedication and hard work this annual event would not be possible. The Police Cadets especially Jack Stokes provided invaluable help and support throughout the event along with



Plenty to enjoy

Stockton Borough Council's Events Team. Last but not

Banner prepared for the event by pupils of Preston Primary School

least a special thanks to all the local businesses who help to support and sponsor the Eid Fusion Festival, without the Teesside community coming together this event would not be such a success.

Sahida Ditta

Support

We would like to thank Anderson-Barrowcliff for providing the feather flags and also the Police and Crime Commissioners and Stockton Council for their continued support.



MP Signs up

Dr. Paul Williams Member of Parliament for Stockton South called into Ropner Park a few weeks ago and joined the “Friends”. He spoke to a number of people in the park and agreed to help with improvements that they would like to see.



Tony Crossen and Ruth Ross in Ropner Park with Dr. Williams



Dr. Williams regularly attends events in Ropner Park and is very appreciative of its importance to Stockton. He commented, “Thanks to everyone who keeps the park such a wonderful place for our community to enjoy”.

He is seen on the left with a group of tennis players.

Ropner Family Visit

Johanna Ropner, a member of the local Ropner family and also the current Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, was given a one hour walking tour of the park a few weeks ago. She was accompanied by the Mayor along with her husband Robert Ropner and father in law Bruce Ropner.

This was an informal visit at the time of year when the floral beds were at their best. We are sure that they would have enjoyed visiting the park which bears their name.

Shelter

Several months ago, members of the Board met with regular dog walkers to discuss the possibility of providing them with some form of shelter in which to have a hot drink, particularly in the winter months.

June Whyte, our first Treasurer, left a legacy to the volunteer group. June was a dog lover and spent many years walking Tania in the park every day. We felt the shelter would be a fitting way to remember her and to provide a much-needed area for dog walkers and others to sit and watch the tennis, chat or have a bite to eat.



Siting

An area close to the café has been identified as the most suitable place to site it and the volunteers have spent some time looking at shelter designs. The one in the photograph is our preferred choice. It fits in with the design of the fountain and the bandstand and the tiles are similar to those on the café roof. When it is spray painted with ‘Ropner Blue’ it

will blend in with everything else.

Seeking Council Approval

The council are keen to see the shelter in place but various steps need to be negotiated. The first one is to obtain Planning Permission for the shelter because the park is a Listed Heritage Park. This could take some time. Once that has been granted, we can organise the base to be laid and soon after the shelter can be installed.

We will need to have some more fund-raising activities to pay for the whole project so we are hoping our annual ceilidh on Friday 15th November will be well supported.

We are hopeful that this new addition to Ropner Park will be in place for the winter.

Vicki Nicholson

Notices

Ceilidh

Stockton Cricket Club Friday November 15th.
7.30—11.00 Price £10.

Christmas fair

Sunday 8th December Ropner Park 11.00—1.00

FoRP Charity Walk

March. Date and charity still to be decided. Look out for details on the FoRP website and Facebook.

Fund Raising Event

Friday 7th. Feb. at Stockton Cricket Club.

Palm Sunday Stalls

Sunday 5th April 2020 are at the front of the café.

Spring Fair and Food Festival

Sunday 10th May. To be confirmed.

Volunteer group dates in 2019

Friday November 2nd Monday December 3rd

FoRP Board Members

Chair

Brian
Scrafton



Vice Chair
Barbara
Charles



Secretary
Stan
Taylorson



Treasurer
Tina
Whiteside



Trustee
Vicki
Nicholson



Trustee
Catherine
Mulloy



Trustee
Jack
Stokes



Website
Facebook

www.forp.org.uk
Friends of Ropner Park



Awards

2011

RHS award for outstanding work in the community.

2012

Civic award from the Mayor of Stockton.

2012

Catalyst outstanding achievement award won by treasurer June Whyte,

2013

RHS award for outstanding work in the community.

2017

Catalyst voluntary group award.

2018

Won the Community Organisation Category in the Tees Valley Achievement Awards for work in hosting the EID Fusion Festival.

Friends of Ropner Park Ltd.

Company No: 06247357 Registered Charity No: 1125093

Contact number: 01642 614459